

English is Tough Stuff

A poem on the difficulty of pronouncing English

Dearest creature in creation,
Study English pronunciation.
I will teach you in my verse
Sounds like corpse, corps, horse, and worse.
I will keep you, Suzy, busy,
Make your head with heat grow dizzy.
Tear in eye, your dress will tear.
So shall I! Oh hear my prayer.

Just compare heart, beard, and heard,
Dies and diet, lord and word,
Sword and sward, retain and Britain.
(Mind the latter, how it's written.)
Now I surely will not plague you
With such words as plaque and ague.
But be careful how you speak:
Say break and steak, but bleak and streak;
Cloven, oven, how and low,
Script, receipt, show, poem, and toe.

Billet does not rhyme with ballet,
Bouquet, wallet, mallet, chalet.
Blood and flood are not like food,
Nor is mould like should and would.
Viscous, viscount, load and broad,
Toward, to forward, to reward.
And your pronunciation's OK
When you correctly say croquet,
Rounded, wounded, grieve and sieve,
Friend and fiend, alive and live.

Ivy, privy, famous; clamour
And enamour rhyme with hammer.
River, rival, tomb, bomb, comb,
Doll and roll and some and home.
Stranger does not rhyme with anger,
Neither does devour with clangour.
Souls but foul, haunt but aunt,
Font, front, wont, want, grand, and
grant,
Shoes, goes, does. Now first say finger,
And then singer, ginger, linger,
Real, zeal, mauve, gauze, gouge and
gauge,
Marriage, foliage, mirage, and age.

Liberty, library, heave and heaven,
Rachel, ache, moustache, eleven.
We say hallowed, but allowed,
People, leopard, towed, but vowed.
Mark the differences, moreover,
Between mover, cover, clover;
Leeches, breeches, wise, precise,
Chalice, but police and lice;
Camel, constable, unstable,
Principle, disciple, label.

Finally, which rhymes with enough –
Though, through, plough, or dough, or
cough?
Hiccough has the sound of cup.
My advice is to give up!

WHY ENGLISH IS SO HARD TO LEARN

We must polish the Polish furniture.
He could lead if he would get the lead out.
The farm was used to produce produce.
The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.
The soldier decided to desert in the desert.
This was a good time to present the present.
A bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.
When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.
I did not object to the object.
The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
The bandage was wound around the wound.
There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row.
They were too close to the door to close it.
The buck does funny things when the does are present.
They sent a sewer down to stitch the tear in the sewer line.
To help with planting, the farmer taught his sow to sow.
The wind was too strong to wind the sail.
After a number of injections my jaw got number.
Upon seeing the tear in my clothes I shed a tear.
I had to subject the subject to a series of tests.
How can I intimate this to my most intimate friend?
I read it once and will read it again
I learned much from this learned treatise.
I was content to note the content of the message.
The Blessed Virgin blessed her. Blessed her richly.
It's a bit wicked to over-trim a short wicked candle.
If he will absent himself we mark him absent.
I incline toward bypassing the incline.